

This update from Stephanie Browning, Director of Columbia/Boone County Public Health and Human Services, was delivered verbally to the Columbia City Council on Monday, April 6, 2020

"Today marks the start of National Public Health Week. I want to take this opportunity to recognize all of the hardworking and talented staff at Public Health & Human Services. They are on the frontline of this pandemic and they have leaned in to respond and care for this community. My work family makes me proud.

I want to thank the city and county departments, their employees, the elected officials and leaders countywide, our healthcare partners and education institutions, our non-profits, our business partners, and the Office of Emergency Management. Their support and response has been tremendous and the relationships that we have built over the many years are proving beneficial during this unprecedented time in our lives.

And most importantly, I extend my sincere thanks to the residents of Columbia and all of Boone County who are doing their part to keep this community healthy and safe. This pandemic has resulted in such unbearable hardship for so many and I appreciate their commitment to themselves, their loved ones and to the community as a whole in doing the right thing and staying at home.

Boone County Update: (April 6, 2020)

- 70 cases
- 22 are in isolation
- 47 have recovered
- 1 is deceased
- 59 contacts are in quarantine
- 123 contacts are out of quarantine
- 18 cases are 15-24 years of age
- 28 are 25-44 years
- 21 are 45-64 years
- 3 are over 65 years
- 27 or 38.6% are travel-related
- 21 or 30% are a contact to a case
- 21 or 30% are community spread
- 1 case is pending investigation

Missouri Update

- 2722 cases
- 39 deaths
- An estimated 31,654 tested through private commercial and state labs

There has been some confusion regarding the difference in numbers reported from our website vs the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services website. I want to clear that up. The numbers that you see on our website are the actual number of positive cases we have received from private commercial labs and the state public health lab and are confirmed to be Boone County residents.

The state website may differ from ours for a couple reasons.

For example, a person is tested by a Boone County lab and there is no address for the individual on the lab report. The state enters the lab into the system as a Boone County positive until they can verify the actual county of residence. If it was not our case, it would be removed from our total.

A second example of difference in totals is that the state's positive totals include inconclusive lab results. This means the test is neither positive nor negative. Sometimes these result from collection issues and sometimes because there isn't enough virus present to determine whether it is positive or negative.

Today we currently have a difference of 6 between our website and the state website. My staff went back and found 6 inconclusive test results that have already been re-tested and are negative. These cases remain as positive counts on the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHHS) website.

We recognized this problem last week and have been working with DHSS since then to try to resolve the issue on their end so that their results match ours.

Testing and Hospital Update

Drive through testing began in Boone County on March 19, 2020.

As of April 6, 2020, MU Health Care reports testing 3,085 people at all sites for their 25 county service area with 98 positives reported from all sites.

Boone Hospital Center reports the testing of 811 people with a total of 15 positives reported.

Representatives from Boone Hospital Center, MU Health Care and Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans Hospital have been holding weekly conference calls to collaborate and coordinate their COVID-19 efforts. They are working together in assessing the regional labor pool, supply levels, equipment and bed capacity, among other things.

MU Health Care has developed plans to rapidly expand ICU bed capacity beyond what is available on a daily basis and continues to utilize plans to maximize the efficiency of personal protective equipment (PPE) use.

Boone Hospital is working closely with the BJC HealthCare system in developing plans and policies that support their staff, providers, patients and community. This includes the creation of a dedicated inpatient unit for suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases; increasing emergency, critical care and medical surge capacity; assessing and preparing all available ventilator options; and providing additional staff training. They continue to screen all visitors, staff and providers who enter the hospital.

Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans Administration hospital implemented a tiered response several weeks ago to prevent the pandemic from affecting their ability to provide care for Veterans. They report that they are not only providing services to the mid-Missouri Veteran population but are also coordinating with their colleagues in some of the hardest hit places in the country to assist through voluntary staffing and providing needed supplies.

Columbia and Boone County Stay at Home Order

The Stay at Home Order for Columbia and Boone County took effect on March 25 at 8:00 a.m. There were some challenges initially but it is steadily improving as processes are in place to determine essential and nonessential businesses and to respond to complaints. Staff from the Contact Center, Community Development, and Public Health & Human Services are working together to carry this out.

Yesterday, I issued updated guidance for residential and commercial construction that took effect today so that these essential business operations can continue safely in the city and county. In doing so, I would request that you consider an amendment to council bill B93-20 on your agenda tonight to remove the administrative delay on the processing of applications for building permits for new construction.

The Missouri Stay at Home Order took effect today.

While I know that you are aware of the work at Public Health & Human Services regarding the disease surveillance, case investigation, and contact tracing that has been on-going since mid-March, I would like to share a little background about how emergencies are managed in Boone County. There are 15 emergency support functions (called ESF's) in the Boone County Emergency Operations Plan that cover the broad range of functions needed to coordinate a response to any type of disaster. Each ESF has a lead and there is a structured system for coordination. This system is coordinated by the Office of Emergency Management for the entire county.

For this pandemic response, several city staff are actively involved in key emergency support functions. I lead the operations section of the response as ESF-8 Health and Medical. Scott Clardy, here tonight, leads the Operations Section at Public Health & Human Services. Steve Hollis, also here tonight, is the primary lead for ESF-6, Mass Care and Human Services. Randy Cole is currently leading ESF-14 Long Term Recovery, and Leigh Kottwicz is leading donations and volunteer management under ESF-7 which is Resources. Steve Sapp is leading the Joint Information System.

At the department level in support of the overall response and multiple emergency support functions, we continue:

- Conducting disease surveillance and investigation, and contact tracing.
- Coordinating with our healthcare system partners.
- Working toward establishing a county-wide isolation and quarantine facility for people who may not be able to isolate or quarantine at home;
- Communicating with nursing homes to confirm sanitation and social distancing practices and visitor policies, offering guidance where needed;

- Creating and providing guidance for safety and sanitation for lodging establishments, grocery stores and food establishments, mobile vendors, pool operators, and apartment complexes with a goal of reducing the risk of exposure and disease transmission;
- Coordinating mental health services and developing mental health messaging and guides for the community.
- Working towards providing case management services for individuals and families that are isolated/quarantined and providing information and referral (in partnership with 2-1-1); utility assistance; medication and medical supply assistance, and pregnancy support services.
- Communicating with Greek Life contacts about the importance of social distancing and working to get communication out to university and college students who still remain in the city about the order and the need to limit gatherings;
- Working closely with the Community Relations staff to update and improve the como.gov/coronavirus website and develop appropriate messages for the community, along with responding to numerous media and social media requests/comments.

In support of multiple emergency support functions, five local funders, the City of Columbia, Boone County, United Way, the Community Foundation, and the Veteran's United Foundation started a collaborative called ComoHelps to consolidate financial donations and volunteering resources for the pandemic response under Leigh Kottwitz. (<http://comohelps.org>)

Financial contributions are being routed to the Heart of Missouri United Way and the Community Foundation of Central Missouri. Nonprofit and governmental volunteer needs are posted along with opportunities for community members to sign up as unaffiliated volunteers for assignment.

A single, joint application process has been developed for nonprofits to submit requests for funding. This allows for expedited access to support the nonprofits and allows coordinated funding for the pandemic.

As a result of this collaboration, funding has been received from state and national foundations for our community.

Under the ESF-6, Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services, the following actions have been taken related to food security:

In coordination with the Food Bank, our major stakeholder that provides food to low-income households in our community; financial and operational support, guidance on safe operations for the Food Bank and Food Pantries, and volunteer recruitment have been provided. The Food Bank's Central Pantry remains operational using a drive through approach. The Food Bank's mobile pantries (including the one that operates out of PHHS' parking lot monthly) are operational and there is discussion about how to expand the use of the mobile pantries. Most community food pantries supplied by the Food Bank remain open.

In coordination with public school districts in Boone County, community-based school feeding programs have been implemented. All programs have been vetted and approved with regard to food safety and provided guidance for the safe distribution of food. These programs serve children ages 2-18.

The WIC program remains operational.

In coordination with Meals on Wheels, Aging Best, and Services for Independent Living, the populations currently receiving home delivered meals and groceries continue to receive those services. The goal is to increase the capacity of these programs to serve more seniors and persons with disabilities and serve people in low-income households who are isolated or quarantined.

With regards to Long Term Recovery, Randy Cole, under ESF-14, is monitoring state and federal funding and benefits for individuals and families impacted by the pandemic in conjunction with a Long Term Recovery Committee that includes members from the Chamber of Commerce, REDI, the Columbia Housing Authority, and other business leaders.

The initial focus is on income replacement, support for nonprofits, and small businesses. This includes monitoring, promoting, and assisting with the applicable state and federal funding for businesses and communities.

Steve Hollis, along with his ESF-6 partners continue to monitor and support non-profit programs which support vulnerable populations.

This includes Turning Point, the Salvation Army lunch program, Loaves and Fishes soup kitchen and the street outreach staff. These programs are operational and there is regular communication with them regarding their status and needs.

Multiple partners are working to ensure that areas in our community with high concentrations of poverty have access to food.

I know there has been a great deal of concern expressed regarding our unsheltered homeless population and so I asked Steve Hollis to be here tonight to discuss this issue with you.”

Steve Hollis, Human Services Manager for the Columbia/Boone County Public Health and Human Services delivered information to the council.

You can view the video of the April 6 Council meeting by visiting CoMo.gov

